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Mr. Watson  
Lincoln Room

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## THE HOMESTEAD.

MAN has a right to land. There is not a single instance among the animal tribes of one being systematically deprived of the means necessary to its existence by others of its own kind. No All-Wise Power ever designed that man alone, of all animated existences, should be dependent on his fellow for the means of supplying his natural wants; that one portion of the race should be forced by another to labor for the subsistence of both: it is through ignorance and fraud that this wrong has been perpetrated; but its day is nearly over. It is not the intention here to argue this question of Right: it is a truth so obvious as only to require statement to make its way rapidly through the world, that MAN HAS A RIGHT TO LAND.

Yet in this so-called free country many are deprived of this right. Although, to enable every family to enjoy their right to the land, it is necessary that no one should monopolize more than a fair share, this just principle has been lost sight of, and a large portion of the people are deprived of their birthright, degraded, and made to labor for the support of idlers.

The right having been discovered, it is now necessary to RESTORE it. No generation of men could have the right to make bargains or regulations to deprive any portion of any future generation of their natural inheritance. No individual of a generation could have a right to part with his own inheritance, and thereby subject himself or his family to a slavish dependence. The right to the soil is INALIENABLE, and this now being well ascertained, it would be atrocious to allow another generation to pass away with the great and growing wrong of Land Monopoly unredressed. How, then, in the safest, speediest, most humane, and most effectual way shall the soil be restored to the people, so that every family may enjoy the possession of an Independent Freehold? The National Reformers propose three measures to bring about the desired result.

### I.—LAND LIMITATION.

In strict justice, the landless ought to be put in immediate possession of their fair share of the appropriated soil, and to receive compensation (as far as possible) from the monopolists for the loss of education, property, and other deprivations they have suffered for want of their Birthright. But, on the one hand, the monopolists would say they had "purchased," or "mixed up their labor with," the soil rightfully belonging to the landless, while on the other hand, the plundered are, from the very nature of their grievance, too unenlightened and dependent to assert at once their entire right. Fortunately, however, the nature of the existing system is such that the landless and the landholders are occasionally changing situations, the monopolists having no security for a transmission of their possessions to their own offspring; for which reason nearly all landholders possessing only their proper share, and all enlightened men even among the monopolists, will be willing to provide a better system for the future by preventing any one *hereafter* from acquiring more than one share of the common inheritance. This single provision, as all will see, would cause all to be freeholders in one generation, and gradually, as the process of restoration went on, the landless would become less dependent, and the social condition of the whole people would gradually improve in about the same ratio that it now grows worse.

The operation would be this: the limitation having been decided on, (say a maximum of 160 acres for a farm,) whenever a monopolist died, the surplus above the limited quantity for each of his heirs must be sold, (to landless purchasers of course,) and the heirs take the proceeds of the sale. Thus the heirs would be sure to get the full value of their ancestors' improvements, and the



landless would gradually gain, what they ought to have been born with, A FOOTHOLD ON THE EARTH.

It will also be necessary to provide a limit for city and village lots, for, although the price of land in cities and villages would reduce, as the landless left them to become freeholders in the country, till none were left that could not profitably be employed and eligibly situated, some Astor or Trinity Corporation, if there were no limit, might take a fancy to monopolize 160 acres of lots and keep them vacant or compel the people to become their tenants. No family in a city or village should be allowed hereafter to acquire a *second* lot for the purpose of exacting Rent, or more than *two* under any circumstances; that is, one for a residence, and one for a place of business. Ponder well, Tenants, on the change of your condition, that this measure would produce.

## II.—INALIENABLE HOMESTEAD.

The proper object of government is, to protect the people in all their natural rights: to secure to them their Homesteads, on which they may obtain a subsistence, and their right to do or say anything not infringing on others' rights to do or say; to do the public works that individuals cannot do; and then to let the people alone.

The first and most essential right is the free use of land, upon which to obtain food, clothing, and shelter. This secured, men are in a condition to obtain and protect all their other rights, and to devise the best possible modes of enjoying them. Without this, the landless must, for the most part, be slaves in some form or other, to those who have possession of the earth. By the possession of wealth, some, without being landholders, may enjoy temporary advantages, may exalt themselves above others, and purchase or coerce the services of the landless poor; but there can be no true freedom without a Free Home, no true state of society where that right is not secured to *all*.

Homes can be secured to all by a common possession of the land, or by an equitable apportionment. In many ages and countries the land has been held in common, and may again be so held. But, so much false selfishness has been engendered by the present inequitable system of landholding among us, that there is very little hope or desire that the land should now be held in common. The want of the age is, that the present inequitable apportionment should give place to a just arrangement. None should starve in a State that has land enough to subsist its population: no one should be compelled to labor for another except for a full and fair equivalent. The security of a sufficient Homestead would be the surest guarantee of the means of subsistence to all willing to labor for them.

To secure Homes to all, it is quite obvious, first, that a limit must be decided upon as the maximum of a family Homestead, and this maximum should be such as would, if possible, not only allow to every family a sufficient allotment, but preserve allotments for the probable increase of population for a reasonable time to come; and, secondly, that each man's house should be his castle, free from mortgage, and from which he could not be ejected, but by his own consent, and that of his wife if he had one.

To allow mortgages, even if sales could only be made to landless persons, would be to keep up the monopoly price of land. The Mortgage is only another and frequently most oppressive form of *Rent*. If it be desirable to enable the landless to become freeholders sooner than they would under the plan of letting monopolies die out with their possessors, rather than allow the mischief-making mortgage, let it be provided that monopolists be required to sell out in a given time. The Homestead must be made inalienable, except only when the head or heads of the family voluntarily choose to transfer it to a landless person.



### III.—FREEDOM OF THE PUBLIC LANDS.

In a State having established a legal limit to the future individual acquisition of land within its borders, in one generation all the land monopolies of that State would necessarily be broken up; and if other States had in the meantime come into the measure, (as they would do rapidly,) after the landless were all supplied with allotments, the remainder of the land would escheat to the State and become public land. This as well as all other lands in possession of the State, and all in possession of the United States, should be properly apportioned in farms and lots, and made free to those becoming of age landless or to those who might prefer to sell to such their possessions. (See Tract "Young America.")

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Thus by the operation of three plain, practicable measures, based upon the impregnable principle of Man's Equal Right to the Soil, in one generation every family, in every State that shall adopt them, will be in possession of Homesteads guaranteed, as long as they choose to occupy them, by the State. At the end of one generation, all the unoccupied land would be public land, instead of speculators', and would be an unfailing resource for all the youth who might find it necessary to swarm like bees from a hive, from the family Homestead.

On the Public Lands the township might be laid out, before settlement, on the best plan that could be devised in conformity with the present division of labor and state of civilization among the people. On the lands already occupied, after the maximum limit should be established, some beneficial arrangements might be adopted to bring order out of the present chaotic divisions. But the great first object is to secure the maximum Limitation.

There is no family but wants a Homestead. Whatever be a man's occupation, he wants a house to shelter his family. If he can secure land in a location suitable for his business he will find means to build him a house. A garden is desirable, and every family not overworked to pay rent may cultivate one. In New-York, already, three-fourths of the people pay, directly and indirectly, one half of their earnings for rent, that the rent-receivers, may live like drones in a hive, without labor. Like drones they must expect to be expelled violently, when the oppression becomes intolerable, unless the mild preventive proposed by the National Reformers be adopted.

Every city is growing to be a New-York: every village is striving to be a city. Land monopolies drive people in excess to the villages and cities. The excess is when the first rent is collected, when there is *one* family that cannot have a home. "If you pile up in large cities, as in Europe," said Jefferson, "you will become corrupt as in Europe, and go to eating one another as they do there!" These words of Jefferson, it is now *proved*, were prophetic. There is no remedy but Land Limitation.

In the State that shall first adopt Land Limitation, and the Inalienable Homestead principle, will the most be obtained for the lands brought into the market by that measure, because, on the death of a land monopolist, the purchasers would not only be from the State itself but from the surrounding States. Such would be the desire to settle in a State in which the Homestead was secured and land provided for each child, that, for a time, possessions would sell as high, under the limit, as the lands did before; and this, perhaps, would go on until the adjoining States should adopt the same measures, which they must do or lose their best population. As the vacant tracts now in the hands of monopolists became occupied by industrious settlers, not only would it be so much easier to make and improve the ordinary necessary roads and bridges; not only would the people have bet-



ter "home markets," but the people would be enabled to make and possess for their own benefit the railroads, plankroads, canals, and all other improvements now monopolized by chartered companies, who get paid for them over and over and over again, and still own them at last, building up nonproducing, corrupting, dangerous aristocracies throughout the land. Land Limitation would be for the true interest of all.

For Land Limitation, then, we must vote : thanks to those patriots, heroes, and martyrs who secured to us the power to vote, that our own will, based on the eternal principle of justice, should be the law of the land. If we do not vote this, we shall lose the power to vote at all. Capital will become richer ; Labor, poorer. Capital will grow tyrannical as it grows rich. When the Laborer must beg of the Capitalist work, or bread, he is in a fair way to sell his vote, and Capital will soon coerce enough votes to control the whole.

We must vote *now*, before it comes to that, or our children will have no resource but to fight ; and they will suffer much before they will fight. Witness Ireland.

Vote, then, now and forever, till we triumph, for Land Limitation, for the Inalienable Homestead, for the Freedom of the Public Lands ; and, while we vote for these radical measures, let us vote, as correctives, for the Ten Hour system in chartered factories and on public works, and for a reduction of disproportionate official salaries. Vote for no men, under any circumstances, who will not pledge themselves in writing to these measures. Vote yourself a farm, or a lot, upon which you may be a free man. Never was anything so just and so great before carried to the ballot box.

Vote that your sons may not be reduced to serfdom, or your daughters to drudgery.

Vote that those out of employ may go to the land and employ themselves. Vote that rents may get cheaper, and labor dearer. Vote that times may get better instead of worse.

The land was not made that some might ride over it, "booted and spurred" on the backs of the others. Then why not vote, for yourself and everybody else, a HOMESTEAD ?

There are always those who prognosticate defeat to every good thing proposed to benefit mankind. Short sightedness and false selfishness are necessary results of the present monopoly of the means of existence. To predict a failure of the Free Soil movement is to distrust the efficacy of the ballot, the power of truth, and the force of justice. This reform must succeed, because it is just and radical. The farmers have three-fourths and more of all the votes. Not one in ten of the farmers can secure homes to their children under the present system. A still smaller proportion of mechanics can do so, and a smaller proportion yet of miners and seamen. Homes for *all* can be secured by the Free Soil measures ; and, at the same time, the farmers, mechanics, miners, sailors, and laborers will be relieved of the support of an expensive aristocracy who would otherwise hold the land and become bloated, besotted, and murderous, like other landed aristocracies.

National Reform, therefore, *must* succeed. A Free Soil *will* be secured ! And the only effect of lethargy and croaking will be to prolong the reign of Land Monopoly in America. One, two, or mayhap half-a-dozen years, and subject Europe to another famine before a Free Soil can be established there. One coward may prevent a victory, or cause a defeat. One laggard may, by retarding a just reform, protract the sufferings and miseries of countless thousands !

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